

## COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### Introduction

The complaints policy and procedures at Enfield Baptist Church (EBC) are based on advice and guidance provided by the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) and shall always be read in conjunction with that and with other related guidance.

The key BUGB document to which the church shall refer is [BUGB Guideline Leaflet C18: Church Complaints Policy and Procedure](#). The latest online version of this document, rather than any other earlier versions, shall always be used by the church.

The primary purpose of EBC's complaints procedure is to provide a process for dealing with complaints relating to the behaviour of, or activities and decisions taken by, the church's staff, charity trustees, or volunteers.

Please note there is a separate process for dealing with a complaint against an Accredited Minister, Minister in Training and Nationally Recognised Pastor related to misconduct and the like. This is available from the Ministry Department of the Baptist Union or on the website [at The Baptist Union of Great Britain : Complaint against an Accredited Minister](#). Examples of how other complaints are to be dealt with are given as follows:

- Complaints regarding the conduct of an accredited Minister or Church Worker where there is no suggestion that their conduct reaches the level for a misconduct investigation **(this is an issue to be dealt with by individual churches or organisations)**. Examples could include persistent failure to keep appointments or use of improper language in public duties;
- Complaints regarding the performance of an accredited Minister or Church Worker **(this is an issue to be dealt with by individual churches or organisations)**;
- Complaints about the support provided to the church or minister(s)/church workers by the Regional Association **(that is a matter for the complaints process of the Regional Association)**;
- Complaints about non-accredited staff of Associations, colleges, or local churches **(this is matter for the Association, College, or local church)**
- Complaints about the application of the Baptist Union's procedures or decisions made by the Baptist Union which do not directly relate to the complainant **(this matter is for the Minister or Church Secretary to feedback to the BUGB on behalf of the Church as appropriate and to be dealt with by individual churches)**;
- Grievances relating to employment decisions **(this is a matter for the "employer's" grievance procedure)**.

And separate guidance is available for employee grievances in [EBC's Employment Policy](#) which all staff should have a copy of.

## General Principles

Wherever possible the church would prefer to follow Scriptural principles of reconciling differences. However, on occasion attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or may not be appropriate. A formal complaints process is available for such cases.

## Can I make a complaint?

Yes. You do not have to be a member of the church to make a complaint. If you believe you have reasonable grounds to make a complaint and you cannot resolve the issue informally or believe it would not be appropriate to do so, you can make a complaint.

## What kind of complaint can I make using this procedure?

You can make a complaint about:  
The services that the church provides.

- For example, toddler groups, foodbanks, baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Poor service might include dirty facilities or the trustees failing to carry out fire extinguisher tests or other health & safety requirements.

The behaviour of a church employee, trustee or volunteer that has affected you or someone for whom you are responsible.

- For example, inappropriate language or behaviour; persistent late payment of bills; sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination.

The application of church policies and procedures, or decisions made by the church, that affect you or someone for whom you are responsible.

- For example, the church withdrawing financial support for a community group.

You should report any safeguarding concern to the church's Designated Person for Safeguarding in the first instance, the Deputy or the Trustee/Deacon also designated safeguarding people for EBC – see our Website at [Enfield Baptist Church : Safeguarding](#) for their details or the noticeboard in the Church Foyer where they are posted for all to view.

## **How do I make a complaint and how will the church deal with it?**

You should submit your complaint in writing using the church's complaints form (see Appendix 1). On receipt of your complaint, the church, acting through its charity trustees, will:

- Acknowledge your complaint and tell you who will review it within 7 days of receipt;
- Within 14 days, begin the review, contacting you for further information if needed; finding out what happened, when it happened, and who was involved, and if necessary, interviewing people involved;
- Inform the person who is the subject of the complaint about the nature of the complaint unless this would seriously prejudice the review;
- Recommend what remedial action, if any, should be taken, giving reasons;
- Write to you informing you of the outcome of the review.

The church may, on occasion, receive related complaints, or several people may make the same complaint. Depending upon the nature of the complaint and when each complaint is received, the trustees may decide to consolidate the review or to deal with the earliest complaint first. The more complex the complaint is, the longer it may take the church to respond. This is especially likely if the complaint relates to historic matters or several people need to be interviewed. Please understand that if the police investigate the person who is the subject of the complaint in relation to the same or related matters, the church may not be able to begin or complete the review until the police have completed their investigations.

Please be aware that the church may decide that it is under a duty to report the matter to statutory authorities or the Charity Commission. If this is the case, the church will write to you to tell you this.

The church will treat the facts and content of your complaint carefully and in line with the church's data protection policy, the essentials of which are published on our website at [Enfield Baptist Church : Privacy Notice](#) but the policy in full is available on request from the Church Office. [BUGB Guideline Leaflet L13](#) on Data Protection shall guide the church in this respect. However, on occasion, the church may need to make a public statement about the subject matter of the complaint, report it to statutory authorities or seek professional advice, and consequently the church cannot guarantee to keep your complaint confidential. You should maintain reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of your complaint, other than to seek professional advice if required. Once you have submitted your complaint and while the matter is being reviewed, you should avoid communicating with the person complained about.

## **What if I am not happy with how the church deals with my complaint?**

You should write to the Church Secretary/Admin Trustee stating that you want to appeal and the grounds for your appeal. The Church Secretary/Admin Trustee will consult with the church leadership to determine if another member of the leadership team and independent Association Regional Minister can review your appeal, and if so, how long it will take for that person to review your appeal. If the church is unable to allocate someone to review your appeal, the Church Secretary/Admin Trustee will let you know, and advise you instead to consider contacting the Charity Commission. An appeal should not include new evidence, unless you could not with reasonable diligence have provided that evidence when you first complained. If you are unhappy with how the church deals with your complaint, you may



choose to contact the Charity Commission, the regulator of charities, and follow the process at <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

### **Vexatious Complaints**

If the church concludes that your complaint is vexatious and you are a church member, the church may consider exercising church discipline. If you are not a church member, the church may not answer any further complaints you make.

**Enfield Baptist Church Complaint Form**

Name:

Contact Details

*How would you prefer us to contact you, email is preferred*

Details of the Complaint

*State the matter or name of the person who is the subject of the complaint, what happened, when and where. Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses. Include any additional information that you think would be helpful. If complaining about a decision, explain what the decision was about, when it was taken, and who made it. Explain what impact this decision has had, or you may fear will have, and upon whom. Provide any additional information that you believe would be helpful on additional sheets.*

Have you tried to resolve this matter informally

*Give brief details of how, when and what was the result.*

Action sought:

*Describe what actions you want the church to take.*

*The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the church's data protection policy [Enfield Baptist Church : Privacy Notice](#). The church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data in order to review and resolve your complaint.*

*We aim to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible and advise you that you may be asked to attend a meeting with Trustees to resolve the issue depending on the severity of your complaint.*

Please indicate whether you would be willing to attend such a meeting: YES or NO

Date Submitted:.....Signature:.....

*Please hand in this form to the Church Office in a sealed envelope for the Admin Trustee or email to [admintrustee@enfieldbaptistchurch.org.uk](mailto:admintrustee@enfieldbaptistchurch.org.uk)*



*Office use only*

*Date Received:*

*Case Number:*

*Action taken and decision made (including by whom)*

Date reply sent to complainant

*Print and place reply sent with the original Complaint form received to retain on file for min.6 years as per the Data Retention Schedule recommended in the [BUGB Guideline Leaflet L13: Data Protection](#). (File to be kept by Admin Trustee/Church Secretary securely).*

Response from complainant

Case resolved and closed or remains open for further action

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**Document control: EBC Complaints policy and procedures**

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Status	Version dated	Meeting
Draft	30 January 2024	Deacons' meeting: Wednesday 13 March 2024
Final	13 November 2024	Deacons' meeting: Wednesday 13 November 2024 Publication

Scheduled review date: April 2026 or earlier if required

**Filename: EBC\_ComplaintsPolicyProcess\_20241113**

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